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Research Note

NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN
FOREST AND RANGE EXPERIMENT STATION

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POLE PRODUCTION DOWN IN 1948 1/

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The production of transmission poles in the Northern Rocky Mountain Region dropped from a high of 817,000 poles in 1947 to 448,000 in 1948, a decrease of 45 percent. This sharp drop is a reversal in the postwar trend of increasing production. In the past four years many new pole plants were established in the region, based largely on the postwar demand for poles in the rural electrification program.

One of the most important factors influencing the low production was the uncertainty of markets in the months ahead. The demand was not as strong as in 1947 and changes in buyers' specifications discouraged production. During the latter part of 1948 there were indications that production was going up and that this trend may continue well into 1949.

Decreases in 1948 were greatest in Montana where production went down by 158,000 poles. In North Idaho production was down 111,000 poles, and in Northeast Washington 100,000. Production by species was down 61 percent in lodgepole pine and 59 percent in western larch. Western redcedar dropped off only 8 percent.

Table 1. Number of poles produced in 1948

Species	Northern Rocky Mountain Region				Percent of total
	Montana	N. Idaho	N. E. Washington	Total	
	Number of poles				Percent
Lodgepole pine	114,705	11,631	11,763	138,099	30.8
Western redcedar	17,841	164,691	30,253	212,785	47.5
Western larch	29,695	28,366	32,818	90,879	20.3
Douglas-fir	4,615	347	457	5,419	1.2
Miscellaneous	-	-	804	804	0.2
Total	166,856	205,035	76,095	447,986	-
Percent	37.2	45.8	17.0	100.0	100.0

1/ The Rocky Mountain Pole and Treating Association sponsored the survey of pole production for 1948. All of the pole producing companies reported their production. The cooperation of these companies in supplying the data is acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

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Table 2. Comparison of pole production by species - 1947 and 1948

Species	1947	1948	Percent change
	Number of pieces		Percent
Lodgepole pine	351,310	138,099	-60.7
Western redcedar	230,872	212,785	- 7.8
Western larch	221,990	90,879	-59.1
Douglas-fir	6,473	5,419	-16.3
Miscellaneous	6,557	804	-87.7
Total	817,202	447,986	-45.2

Table 3. Distribution of production by length classes

Species	Length classes					
	25' & under	30'	35'	40'	45' & over	All
	Percent of total					
Lodgepole pine	5	29	55	9	2	100
Western redcedar	16	21	25	15	23	100
Western larch	4	23	47	14	12	100
Douglas-fir	-	15	34	16	35	100
Miscellaneous	21	31	31	13	4	100
All species 1948	11	22	35	14	18	100
All species 1947	14	25	35	16	10	100

Dash indicates less than 1 percent.

Table 4. Distribution of production by A.S.A. classes

Species	A.S.A. classes									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	All
	Percent of total										
Lodgepole pine	-	-	1	4	10	33	44	6	2	-	100
Western redcedar	5	7	10	16	19	18	16	5	3	1	100
Western larch	-	2	6	16	25	33	14	2	2	-	100
Douglas-fir	6	11	17	22	17	19	8	-	-	-	100
Miscellaneous	-	-	3	11	17	26	43	-	-	-	100
All species 1948	3	5	8	14	18	23	21	5	2	1	100
All species 1947	1	2	5	11	20	27	26	4	3	1	100

Dash indicates less than 1 percent.